



Readers' Theater with Animal Masks for Preschoolers



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Barnyard Song

In this preschool version of Readers' Theater for 3 to 5-year-olds, the librarian, teacher or parent becomes the narrator, while the children participate by reading (or simply saying) the animal sounds at the appropriate place in *Barnyard Song*.

1. Read *Barnyard Song* to the children once or twice. Ask the listeners if they would like to "become" one of the animals and help you read the story. There are 10 animal characters. Let all participate who are willing.
2. If possible, give a copy of the book or a typed "script" to each child. They will experience the relationship between the fun they are having and the words on the page. Also, young children like to believe that they can read and believing this will help them become readers.
3. Distribute the masks in the order in which the animals speak in the story. Arrange the children in a circle or line in that order.

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|--------|-----------|------------|---------|-----------|
| 1. Bee | 2. Cat | 3. Rooster | 4. Pig | 5. Sheep |
| 6. Cow | 7. Donkey | 8. Turkey | 9. Duck | 10. Horse |

4. Talk to the children about taking turns and saying their part when their animal "speaks" in the story.
5. Read the book, pausing to let each "animal" say his or her part at the appropriate part in the story. With very young children, gesturing toward the child will help them keep their turn. Repeat as often as the children are interested and having fun or until time runs out. If children want to try other parts, have them exchange masks and become that animal.

If time permits, or at your next gathering, perform the Readers' Theater again with another poem or song such as "The Farmer in the Dell" or "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

Old MacDonald Had a Farm

All of the children get to sing the song. Individual children are picked to wear the masks. They supply the animal sounds that go with the mask they are wearing while everyone else continues to sing the song. [Script for Old MacDonald Had a Farm]

The Farmer in the Dell

This story can be used with any number of children. Pick the sequence of people and animals that you and the children want to use. Props are minimal: masks for the animals and hats for the people (farmer, straw hat; wife, bonnet; child, baseball cap). The narrator reads or sings the story and the children say "Hi!" when their part is mentioned. Or select a "chorus" to sing the song and "actors" to do their parts. [Script for "The Farmer in the Dell"]

Making the Masks

Materials Needed

Paper (construction, colored typing paper, card stock, tag board, craft foam, etc.)

Cutting utensils: scissors, X-Acto® knife, hole punch

Tie: Thin elastic cord

Decorating materials: feathers, markers, crayons, paints

Directions

1. Print mask.
2. Copy mask on chosen material.
3. Cut out masks and eyeholes.
4. Color and decorate masks to your needs or let children color and decorate.
5. Punch two holes on either side of mask.
6. Knot and staple elastic strip through holes, sized to fit the child's head.



















